



**QUILLS**

Queen's University Indigenous Land-Based Learning STEM  
Queen's University Biological Station

# Anishinaabe and Haudenosaunee Clan Systems

Systems of governance



# QUILLS

Queen's University Indigenous Land-Based Learning STEM  
Queen's University Biological Station

## **Please Note:**

- What is shared in this slide show represent an Indigenous perspective, however, Indigenous peoples local to this territory may hold different Clan teachings and understandings. This reflects the fact that Indigenous ways of knowing and being are diverse and reminds us of the dangers of pan-Indigenizing.



**QUILLS**

Queen's University Indigenous Land-Based Learning STEM  
Queen's University Biological Station

# Clan Systems

Within the Clan System, animals are teachers. Animals offer guidance to humans on how to conduct oneself in a good way.

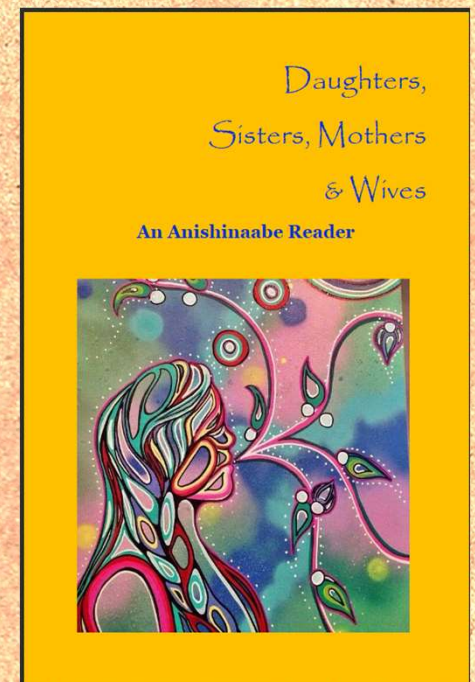


## Anishinaabe Clan System

- Descriptions of Anishinaabe Clans can be found in *Daughters, Sisters, Mothers and Wives An Anishinaabe Reader*
- Author Brennor Jacobs, Turtle Clan of the Oneida Nation, has compiled these descriptions from Anishinaabe Knowledge Holders.
- Translated by Amanda Aikens (Ojibwa-Potawatomi of the Midewiwin Lodge), Wahbzii Shognosh-Myers (Ojibwa-Potawatomi Bear Clan), Kyla Stonefish (Ojibwa-Potawatomi Sucker Fish Clan)



**Brennor Jacobs, Turtle Clan of the Oneida Nation, Communications Major at Brock University, Ontario Native Literacy Coalition**





# QUILLS

Queen's University Indigenous Land-Based Learning STEM  
Queen's University Biological Station

## Anishinaabe Knowledge Contributors



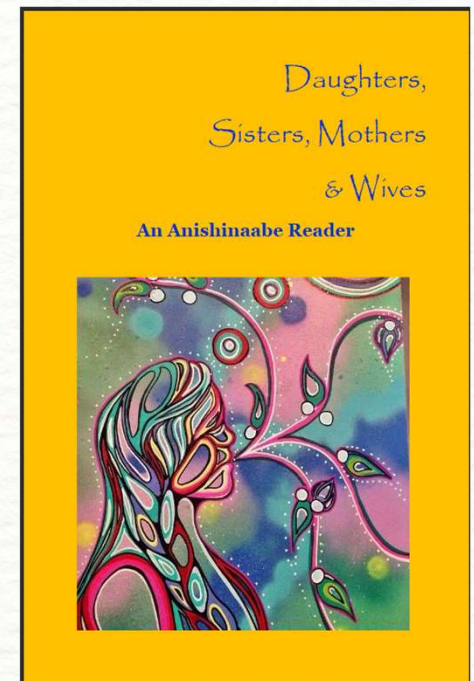
Amanda Aikens & Baby  
Ojibwa-Potawatomi of the  
Midewiwin Lodge



Kyla Stonefish  
Ojibwa-Potawatomi  
Sucker Fish Clan



Wahbzii Shognosh-Diaz  
Ojibwa-Potawatomi  
Bear Clan





**QUILLS**

Queen's University Indigenous Land-Based Learning STEM  
Queen's University Biological Station

## Anishinaabe Clan System



Amanda Aikens & Baby  
Ojibwa-Potawatomi of the  
Midewiwin Lodge

**“The clan system is very important to us. In our culture, we have seven clans that make up our traditional governance system, and those clans are all born with different traits and attitudes that can be applied to modern jobs such as policing and social work.”- Amanda Aikens, *Daughters, Sisters, Mothers and Wives An Anishinaabe Reader*, (Jacobs, 2015)**



**QUILLS**

Queen's University Indigenous Land-Based Learning STEM  
Queen's University Biological Station

## Anishinaabe Clan System

- very important to the Anishinaabe
- clans were initiated by the Creator
- each clan has a different duty and responsibility
- each clan is equal

**Odoodemiwaan-** "their clans"

### HOW THE CREATOR INITIATED THE CLAN SYSTEM:

The Creator convinced the animals to teach humans how to **live in balance and harmony on the earth**. The animals also teach the humans how to govern themselves with **equitable social and political structures**.



**QUILLS**

Queen's University Indigenous Land-Based Learning STEM  
Queen's University Biological Station

# The Seven Original Odoodemiwaan

Ajijaak Dodem  
Crane clan

Maang Dodem  
Loon clan

Giigoonh Dodem  
Fish clan

Makwa Dodem  
Bear clan

Waabizheshi Dodem  
Martin clan

Wawaashkeshi Dodem  
Deer clan

Binesiinh Dodem  
Bird clan





**QUILLS**

Queen's University Indigenous Land-Based Learning STEM  
Queen's University Biological Station

# Ajijaak Dodem

Crane Clan



ElbowLakeCentre.ca

## Leadership- External Relations

- Responsible for negotiations and communicating with people from other communities.
- Help to put new ideas into action.
- Viewed as intelligent.
- Use their knowledge of the teachings to make decisions for their community.
- Focuses on Nation-to-Nation relations.

© Queen's University Biological Station (QUBS), 2023



# QUILLS

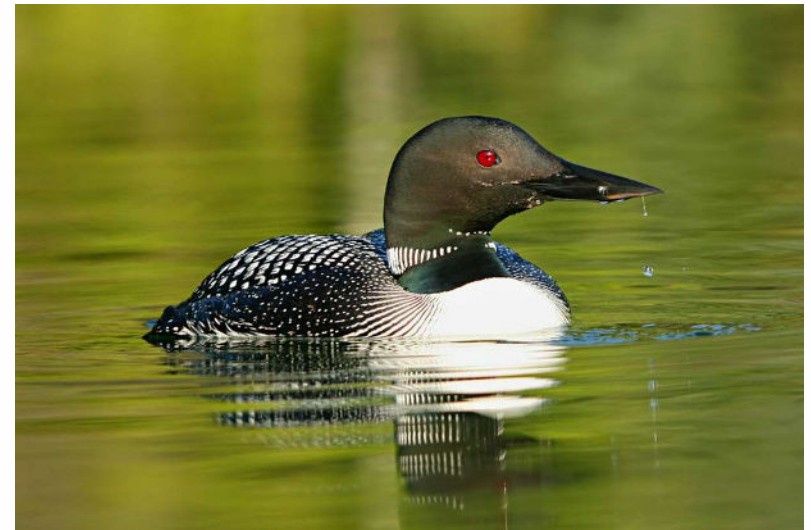
Queen's University Indigenous Land-Based Learning STEM  
Queen's University Biological Station

## Leadership-Internal Relations

- Responsible for settling disputes **within** the community.
- Local leadership roles.
- Members of the Loon Clan are often peacemakers.
- The Crane and Loon Clans (the two leadership clans) represent balance

ElbowLakeCentre.ca

## Maang Dodem Loon Clan



© Queen's University Biological Station (QUBS), 2023



**QUILLS**

Queen's University Indigenous Land-Based Learning STEM  
Queen's University Biological Station

# Giigoonh Dodem

## Fish Clan



ElbowLakeCentre.ca

## Mediators

- Gifted mediators, planners, and thinkers.
- Fish Clan people are intellectual and have the strength of resolving differences of opinions.
- Politicians would ask members of the Fish Clan for advice and guidance on how to settle disputes.

© Queen's University Biological Station (QUBS), 2023



# QUILLS

Queen's University Indigenous Land-Based Learning STEM  
Queen's University Biological Station

## Healers

- Play a role in the health and security of the community.
- Bear clan members are thoroughly knowledgeable about plants, berries, roots, and bark medicines (Jacobson, 2012).
- Known as the **medicine people**.

## Makwa Dodem Bear Clan





**QUILLS**

Queen's University Indigenous Land-Based Learning STEM  
Queen's University Biological Station

# Waabizheshi Dodem

## Marten Clan



ElbowLakeCentre.ca

## Providers and Protectors

- Members of the Marten Clan are expert hunters and protectors.
- They are knowledgeable and skilled in tracking their food as well as their enemies.
- Responsibilities for economic development and planning defense strategies for their community.
- Adopt people who do not know which clan they belong to. © Queen's University Biological Station (QUBS), 2023



# QUILLS

Queen's University Indigenous Land-Based Learning STEM  
Queen's University Biological Station

## Well-Being

- This clan represents the “gentle people”.
- Deer Clan members preserved sacred teachings.
- Concerned with the well-being of the community and healing the attitudes of others.
- Ceremonies, celebrations, and other social aspects are the responsibility of the Deer Clan.

## Wawaashkeshi Dodem Deer Clan





**QUILLS**

Queen's University Indigenous Land-Based Learning STEM  
Queen's University Biological Station

# Bineshiinh Dodem

## Bird Clan



## Spiritual and Knowledge Leaders

- Members of the Bird Clan are Knowledge Keepers.
- They have responsibilities for teaching others and expanding the community's knowledge.
- Birds are the closest animal to the Creator and are understood to be able to bring wisdom from the sky down to earth.

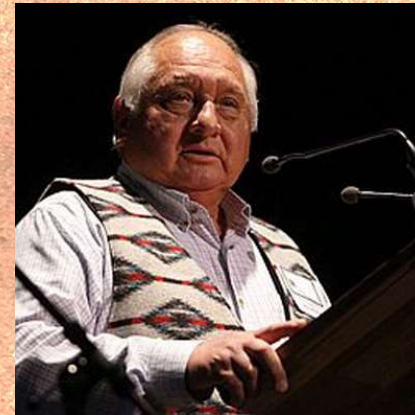


**QUILLS**

Queen's University Indigenous Land-Based Learning STEM  
Queen's University Biological Station

# Haudenosaunee Clan System

- Descriptions of Haudenosaunee Clans comes from Author Tom Porter, *And Grandma Said...Iroquois Teachings as passed down through the oral tradition*
- Tom Porter, a Bear Clan Elder, has compiled these descriptions of the 9 Haudenosaunee clans through listening to many Elders speak about the Clans.



Tom Porter, Bear Clan Elder,  
Akwasasne Mohawk Nation



And  
Grandma  
Said...

**Iroquois Teachings**

as passed down through the oral tradition



**TOM PORTER**  
(Sakokweniónkwas)  
Bear Clan Elder of the Mohawk Nation





**QUILLS**

Queen's University Indigenous Land-Based Learning STEM  
Queen's University Biological Station

# Haudenosaunee Clan System

- It is said that **Ro'nikhrowá:nen** ("he who has good ideas") introduced the Haudenosaunee to the clan system during a time of great population growth
- Clan system was revitalized by the **Peace Maker**
- Haudenosaunee clans are **matrilineal** (inherited from mothers)
- Clans are named after various animals
- Provides guidance on how to conduct oneself spiritually, socially, economically, and politically

- Clan mothers** head each clan.
- In the past, the oldest woman of the clan was recognized as the clan leader.
- Today, clan mothers are **chosen** for their cultural wisdom and dedication to their people.



**QUILLS**

Queen's University Indigenous Land-Based Learning STEM  
Queen's University Biological Station

# Haudenosaunee Clan System

Ro'nikhrowá:nen provided the Haudenosaunee with **two moieties** (groupings) of clans.

## The First Grouping:

Rotiskaré:wake (Bear Clan)

Roti'nehsí:yo (Snipe Clan)

Rotinenyo'thró:non (Deer Clan)

Tyawerón:ko (Eel Clan)

## The Second Grouping:

Rotinyahton (Turtle Clan)

Ronathahyón:ni (Wolf Clan)

Tsyani'to (Beaver Clan)

Kahrhakón:ha Teyakoia'tàhkhwa  
(Hawk Clan)



**QUILLS**

Queen's University Indigenous Land-Based Learning STEM  
Queen's University Biological Station

# Haudenosaunee Clan System

- Each member of a specific clan are considered **relatives**, even if they are from different nations
- The number of clans will vary, depending on each nation:
  - Mohawk has 3 clans
  - Oneida has 3 clans
  - Onondaga has 9 clans
  - Cayuga has 5 clans
  - Seneca has 8 clans
  - Tuscarora has 7 clans(Nations are listed from East to West, following the direction that the sun rises and sets.)



# QUILLS

Queen's University Indigenous Land-Based Learning STEM  
Queen's University Biological Station

## Rotiskaré:wake

### Bear Clan

- Bear Clan people are very **sensitive** to others and **somewhat quiet**.
- Members of the Bear Clan are very knowledgeable about **medicines** and are known as **healers**.
- They have a diplomatic nature and tend to stay away from trouble.
- Bear Clan people are often known to hold grudges and they will not forget when they have been hurt or mistreated.





**QUILLS**

Queen's University Indigenous Land-Based Learning STEM  
Queen's University Biological Station

## Snipe Clan



ElbowLakeCentre.ca

## Roti'nehsí:yo

- Members of the Snipe Clan often keep themselves busy and are usually working on something.
- Snipe Clan tend to be positive people and have lots of energy.
- Snipe Clan people do not hesitate to help others with projects, and they will put their whole heart into what they are involved in.

© Queen's University Biological Station (QUBS), 2023



# QUILLS

Queen's University Indigenous Land-Based Learning STEM  
Queen's University Biological Station

## Rotinenyo'thró

- Originally from the Onondaga or the Cayuga nations.
- Members of the Deer Clan are generally timid/shy and tend to take on the role of followers instead of leaders.
- Deer Clan people are kind-hearted and sensitive.

### Deer Clan





**QUILLS**

Queen's University Indigenous Land-Based Learning STEM  
Queen's University Biological Station

## Eel Clan

# Tyawerón:ko



- The Eel Clan is of the water.
- Eel clan members are caring with a special relationship to the water.
- Eel clan members are thought to be caring, respectful, and conscientious advocates.



# QUILLS

Queen's University Indigenous Land-Based Learning STEM  
Queen's University Biological Station

## Rotinyahton

- The turtle is a symbol of the earth.
  - We live on Turtle Island (North America) and walk on the turtle's back.
- Members of the Turtle Clan are consistent, determined, and usually very shy.
- Turtle Clan people tend to have characteristics that are between Wolf and Bear Clan.

## Turtle Clan







Wolf Clan



ElbowLakeCentre.ca

QUILLS

Queen's University Indigenous Land-Based Learning STEM  
Queen's University Biological Station

## Ronathahyón:ni

- Members of the Wolf Clan are honest and straight forward.
- These people are thought to have diplomatic characteristics and will easily say what is on their minds.
- Wolf Clan people are hard workers and seek out evidence and truth.
  - “The Wolf Clan people seem not to believe what is told to them at first. They always cross-examine, but once satisfied, they are workers and believers” (Porter, 2008).

© Queen's University Biological Station (QUBS), 2023



# QUILLS

Queen's University Indigenous Land-Based Learning STEM  
Queen's University Biological Station

## Tsyani'to

- The Beaver clan is of the water.
- Beaver clan members are thought to be hardworking, persevering, industrious, artistic, self-sufficient, creative and, patient.

## Beaver Clan



© Queen's University Biological Station (QUBS), 2023



**QUILLS**

Queen's University Indigenous Land-Based Learning STEM  
Queen's University Biological Station

## Hawk Clan

# Kahrhakón:ha Teyakoia'tàhkhwa



ElbowLakeCentre.ca

- The Hawk Clan is a clan of the air.
- Like eagles, hawks represent courage and strength.
- Hawk clan members are thought to be brave and able to handle life's challenges.

© Queen's University Biological Station (QUBS), 2023



QUILLS

Queen's University Indigenous Land-Based Learning STEM  
Queen's University Biological Station

# Rotihshennakéhte

## They Carry the Name

- The Rotihshennakéhte were **born without a Clan.**
- “Many years ago, when our people were attacked and killed, our ancestors would go to the place where they lost people and capture women, men, and children to replace them. These captives...were adopted and married into the Mohawks. They and their offspring were, and still are, called the people of the Rotihshennakéhte” (Porter, 2008).



**QUILLS**

Queen's University Indigenous Land-Based Learning STEM  
Queen's University Biological Station

## References

- Discover the origins of the Rotinonhsión:ni clan system | Montréal centre-Ville ([montrealcentreville.ca](http://montrealcentreville.ca))
- Jacobs, B. (2015). Daughters, Sisters, Mothers & Wives: An Anishinaabe Reader. Ontario Native Literacy Coalition.
- Porter, T. (2008). And Grandma Said-- Iroquois Teachings as passed down through the oral tradition. (L. Forrester, Ed.). Xlibris Corp.
- <https://www.haudenosauneeconfederacy.com/clan-system/>